CITY COUNCIL

Public Safety Committee

Monday, March 7, 2011
Council Office
5 p.m.

Committee Members Attending: D. Sterner, chair, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, J. Waltman

Others Attending: D. Kersley, D. Robinson, L. Kelleher, W. Heim, C. Geffken, D. Kersley, C. Younger, C. Weidel, H, Tangredi

Mr. Sterner called the Committee meeting to order at approximately 5:45pm.

Quality of Life Ticketing Update

Mr. Kersley distributed an update to the Committee and noted that tickets are posted on problem properties daily and mailed to the property owners weekly. He stated that those receiving tickets have the ability to pay the fine or request an Administrative hearing before the Community Development Director or his representative. He noted that only eight (8) Administrative hearings have been requested to date. After the hearing, the property owner has the ability to either pay the fine or further appeal the hearing administrator's decision to the Court of Common Pleas. He explained that this process skirts the Magisterial District Justice system. He noted that if the property owner fails to pay the fine, the fine will go to a collection agency.

Hiring CBO, Deputy CD Director, Codes Manager Update

Mr. Robinson stated that candidates for the Chief Building Official (CBO) were conducted and an offer is being prepared for one of the individuals interviewed.

Mr. Geffken reported that the application for Deputy CD Director has been reviewed and some candidates have been selected for a second interview. He stated that the Deputy CD Director will also be the Housing Coordinator or "Housing Czar" as defined in the Act 47 Recovery Plan.

Mr. Geffken stated that the candidates for the Fire Chief position are currently in the interview phase. Mr. Geffken stated that the advertisement for Codes Manager just appeared in the Reading Eagle. He noted that further advertisement will be conducted in various trades' journals and on Monster.com.

There was next a discussion on the need to crack down on illegal rental properties and to increase Codes Enforcement.

Mr. Geffken stated that currently the City has no strategic plan.

Ms. Kelleher inquired if Mr. Geffken was referring to the City's comprehensive plan. She noted that this plan was adopted around 2001 and needs to be updated. She explained the comprehensive plan process and how it ties together a variety of City issues into one document. She stated that many cities base their program budgets on initiatives in the comprehensive plan.

Housing and Zoning

Mr. Kersley reviewed the memorandum distributed at the February 28th Committee of the Whole. He stated that the HPO (composed of Ms. Kelleher. Ms. Guckin, Mr. Kersley and Mr. Natale) to draft the ordinance will be reconvening. He noted that Ms. Kelleher is meeting with Attorney Welz and himself tomorrow afternoon about the ordinance. Mr. Waltman suggested developing a flow chart showing how the ordinance will be implemented.

Mr. Kersley noted that the new ordinance will include a penalty for those who failed to submit application and operate illegal rentals. He noted that the ordinance currently on the books contains no penalty language for those failing to comply with the registration/permit process.

Transiency Policy

No update was provided.

Trades & Construction Permit Discounts

Mr. Geffken provided an update stating that no discounted trades or construction permits were provided in 2010; however a discounted permit was issued for the Goggleworks Apartments. He stated that the Trades and Construction permits for the Goggleworks project were discounted by approximately $85K overall.

Other Matters

Mr. Sterner suggested looking at language regarding improving penalties for the operation of illegal garages at the next meeting.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that the April meeting also include an update on the Youth Violence Task Force report.

The Public Safety Committee adjourned at approximately 7:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk